

How to beat smoking, other bad habits with better self-control

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CNN:

Ready to kick your bad habit once and for all?

Even if you're not completely committed yet, there's a technique that may unconsciously help, whether you're intending to quit smoking, binge eating, gambling or another addictive behavior — and even if you don't think you're ready.

A review of addiction research, published in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, suggests mindful meditation strengthens self-control in smokers, even among those smokers who haven't set an intention to quit.

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“Rather than trying to stop smoking, IBMT focuses on improving the self-control network in the brain and moderating stress-reactivity, that may help treat the inner cause of smoking,” says lead author Yi-Yuan Tang, a professor of psychological sciences at Texas Tech. “Moreover, there was no correlation between intention and smoking changes. If smokers do not have an intrinsic need and craving, why not change smoking behavior?”

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The motivational system is a set of brain mechanisms that helps achieve goals, according to Art Markman, professor of psychology at the University of Texas and author of “*Smart Change: Five Tools to Create New and Sustainable Habits in Yourself and Others.*” Your motivational system takes goals and uses one set of brain mechanisms, which Markman calls the “Go system,” to drive behavior. The “Stop system” tries to avoid succumbing to temptations or prevent things you don't want to do.

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